

Message Text

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SUBJECT: WORLD CONFERENCE TO COMBAT RACISM AND RACIAL DIS-
CRIMINATION

1. EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED COPY OF REPORT WHICH FIJI REP
PLANS TO PRESENT TO WORLD CONFERENCE TO COMBAT RACISM AND
RACIAL DISCRIMINATION MEETING 24 - 25 AUGUST IN GENEVA.
FIJI WILL BE REPRESENTED BY THEIR COUNSELLOR OF EMBASSY
IN BRUSSELS, PSECI BUNE.

2. ENTITLED "REPORT ANALYSING SOME OF THE PROBLEMS OF
RACIAL DISCRIMINATION THAT MIGHT BE FOUND IN FIJI AND
INDICATING HOW THESE PROBLEMS HAVE BEEN DEALT WITH", PRESENT-
ATION EXPLAINS EVOLUTION OF CONSTITUTIONAL SAFEGUARDS FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPED DURING FIJI'S EMERGENCE FROM BRITISH
COLONIAL RULE. DOCUMENT STATES THAT UPON ACCESSION TO THE
INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION OF ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION,
FIJI STUDIES ITS LAWS TO DETERMINE WHETHER THEY MET
STANDARDS OF CONVENTION. REPORT THEN OUTLINES LAWS AND
NOTES IN PARTICULAR 1976 AMENDMENT TO PUBLIC ORDER
ACT WHICH MAKES IT AN OFFENSE TO GENERATE RACIAL DIS-
HARMONY OR CAUSE FEELINGS OF ILL-WILL, FEAR, ALARM OR
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INSECURITY AMONG MEMBERS OF A RACE OR COMMUNITY. REPORT
POINTS UP CONSTITUTIONALLY ESTABLISHED ROLE OF OMBUDSMAN IN
PROTECTING INDIVIDUALS FROM RACIAL DISCRIMINATION OR
VIOLATION OF THEIR RIGHTS BY GOF.

3. REPORT NOTES THAT UPON ACCESSION TO INTERNATIONAL
CONVENTION, FIJI AFFIRMED THE RESERVATIONS (PREVIOUSLY

MADE ON ITS BEHALF BY U.K.) REGARDING LAND, THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND EDUCATION WHICH REPORT STATES SHOULD BE VIEWED IN THE FIJI PERSPECTIVE AND NOT SEEN AS RACIAL DISCRIMINATION. RE LAND, THE REPORT STATES THAT OWNERSHIP HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN VESTED IN FAMILY GROUPS RATHER THAN INDIVIDUALS WHICH HAS LED TO COMPLICATED SYSTEM OF ADMINISTRATION. IN ATTEMPT TO ACCOMMODATE TRADITION BUT ALLOW BETTER LAND EXPLOITATION, NATIVE LAND TRUST BOARD LEASES LAND TO NON-FIJIAN FARMERS. 1976 AMENDMENT TO LEGISLATION ALLOWS LEASES OF 30 YEARS WITH ENTITLEMENT FOR RENEWAL OF 20 YEARS.

4. REQUEST EXPLAINS THAT ALTHOUGH ELECTIONS ON A COMMON

ROLL BASIS IS ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE, SEATS IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVE ARE DIVIDED INTO NATIONAL AND COMMUNAL ROLLS IN INTEREST OF MAINTAINING MULTI-RACIAL HARMONY AT PRESENT STAGE OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT.

5. OF EDUCATION, REPORT SAYS THAT GREAT STRIDES HAVE BEEN MADE TOWARD INTEGRATION BOTH IN STAFFING AN ENROLLMENT DURING FIJI'S EIGHT YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE. TODAY VERY FEW SCHOOLS CATER TO ONE RACE; THOSE THAT DO, DO SO FOR DEMOGRAPHIC RATHER THAN DISCRIMINATION REASONS. REPORT CONCLUDES, "IT IS OBSERVED THAT COUNTRIES CAN LEGISLATE AGAINST AND DISCOURAGE PUBLIC MANIFESTATIONS OF RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, BUT THE MINIMIZATION OF PRIVATE UNCLASSIFIED

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PREJUDICE OSTENSIBLY BASED ON RACIAL OR CULTURAL DIFFERENCES TAKES TIME REINFORCED BY A POSITIVE AND SUSTAINED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM. FIJI HAS BEEN EFFECTUAL ON BOTH RENTS".

6. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH GOF COULD BE EPXTED TO PUT BEST POSSIBLE INTERPRETATION TO ITS SYSTEM AND EFFORRTS TO "MINIMIZE" (INTERESTING CHOICE OF WORDS) PREJUDICE, WE BELIEVE IT HAS NOT OVERSTATED ITS CASE. THE LEGAL SAFEGUARDS AGAINST DISCRIMINATION ARE REAL, AND THE PLAYOFF DEMOCRACY AND FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND ASSOCIATION IS SUCH A PART OF DAILY PRIVATE AND PUBLIC LIFE AS TO ALLOW FULL AIRING OF ANY EVIDENCE OF INSTITUTIONAL DISCRIMINATION. WHAT IS MORE, THE GOF IS, IN FACT, SERIOUSLY COMMITTED TO SEEKING BALANCED SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS WHICH ARISE AMONG FIJI'S CULTURALLY AND RACIALLY DIVERSE CITIZENS. CHODON

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